

REMARKS

Claims 1-28 and 42-46 appear in this application for the Examiner's review and consideration. Claims 29-41 have been canceled. Claims 1, 4, 5, 20, 43 and 44 are currently amended, and claims 44-46 are new.

No new matter is introduced by these amendments since the amended and new claims are supported by the specification and claims as filed. In particular, the comb assembly and moving jaws are supported in the specification at, e.g., Figs. 2 and 3 and the detailed description thereof on pages 21 to 35.

REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 112

The Examiner has rejected claims 4 and 42 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, for, among other reasons, non-grammatical usages. Applicants respectfully submit that the amendments to these claims overcome and obviate all the Examiner's rejections.

REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 102

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-3 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Japan patent publication JP 7-240355 A2 by Shinichi ("Shinichi"). Applicants respectfully submit that Shinichi does not anticipate the claims because, *inter alia*, Shinichi does not disclose concurrently splitting apart a plurality of wafers, and, therefore, certainly does not disclose a comb assembly and a pair of moving jaws configured and adapted to concurrently split apart a plurality of wafers. One or both of these limitations are recited in all pending independent claims, namely claims 1, 5, 20, 42 and 45.

The Shinichi reference describes an apparatus for separating bonded wafers wafer-by-wafer, one wafer at a time. Described apparatus 5 has a single, fixed, separation-jig element 20 and a single, movable, separation-jig element 21. The movable separation-jig element in turn has a single insertion part 24. When a single wafer 3 is positioned in the jig and the single movable element moved toward the single fixed element, the single insertion element is forced between the bonded surface of the single wafer to split the wafer into two layers, layers 1 and 2. See Shinichi at, e.g., Abstract and Figs. 3, 4 and 6.

Applicants invention is considerably different. All independent claims recite either concurrently splitting apart a plurality of wafers, or recite a comb assembly and jaw structures configured and adapted to concurrently split apart a plurality of wafers. It includes, *inter alia*, comb assemblies 121 and 122 (Fig. 1) with jaw structures 121b and 122b (Fig. 2). The jaw structures have jaw portions 1211b and 1212b each of which, in turn, have a plurality of edges, such as edges A11b and A12b. When both jaw portions are jointly moved together so that their plurality of edges, such as edges A11b and A12b, are brought against a plurality of wafers, the edges concurrently split apart each of the plurality of wafers. See the specification at, e.g., page 27, lines 13-32.

Since Shinichi does not disclose splitting apart a plurality of wafers with a pair of jaws, this reference cannot anticipate any of the pending claims, all of which recite, either directly or by inheritance, a comb assembly and jaw structures that concurrently split apart a plurality of wafers. Also, Shinichi cannot anticipate for the further reason that this reference discloses an apparatus with a jig having one fixed element but only one moveable element, whereas the pending claims recite that both jaws of the jaw structures are concurrently moved towards each other.

ALLOWABLE SUBJECT MATTER

The Examiner has found that claims 5-28 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. In response, Applicants have rewritten claim 5 in independent form including all limitations of its parent claim, claim 1.

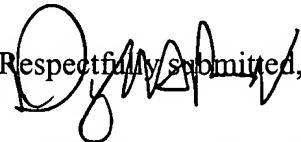
The Examiner has also found that claims 4, 42 and 43 would be allowable if rewritten to overcome rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. Applicants respectfully submit that these claims have been so rewritten.

Therefore, it is believed that claims 4-28, 42 and 43 are allowable for these additional reasons.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above, the application is believed to be in condition for allowance, early notice of which would be appreciated. Should any issues remain, a personal or telephonic interview is respectfully requested to discuss the same in order to expedite the allowance of all the claims in this application.

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Date

Respectfully submitted,


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